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**ABSTRACT**

Most student leaders are willing to work through the system to bring about the changes they desire, but more often than not, they don't know how. This booklet was written to respond to that need. It is an attempt to describe to high school student council leaders the personal requirements and techniques for bringing about the constructive changes they seek for their schools and student councils. The word "revolution" will rest a little uncomfortably for some, but it seems to the author that very revolutionary things can be brought about through the persistent use of reasonable and officially recognized processes. The basic thesis is that working through the system is ultimately more effective than fighting against it. As a technique, the silent revolution does not exist in a vacuum; it succeeds or fails depending on the individual leader's reasons for leading, his outlook on solving leadership problems, and the development of his own leadership potential. For this reason, this booklet is an attempt not only to describe a technique but to put it in a total leadership perspective as well: why one leads, how one leads, the effects of that leadership, and the problems of self-renewal. (Author/PC)

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# THE SILENT REVOLUTION IN THE SEVENTIES

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DYNAMIC  
LEADERSHIP  
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Kent M. Keith

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# **The Silent Revolution in the Seventies**

**Dynamic Leadership in the Student Council**

by Kent M. Keith

*The Silent Revolution in the Seventies* is a revised edition of *The Silent Revolution* by Kent M. Keith, published in 1968 by the Harvard Student Agencies, Inc., 2 Trowbridge St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

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TO MY FATHER  
Bruce E. Keith

a man of strength,  
courage, and  
leadership skill

*"Patience and gentleness  
is power"*

## Author's Preface

Most student leaders, I have found, are willing to work through the system to bring about the changes they desire. But more often than not, they don't know *how*. *The Silent Revolution* was written to answer that *how*. It is an attempt to describe to high school student council leaders the personal requirements and techniques for bringing about the constructive changes they seek for their schools and student councils.

The word "revolution" will rest a little uncomfortably for some, but it seems to me that very revolutionary things can be brought about through the persistent use of reasonable and officially recognized processes. The basic thesis is that working through the system is ultimately more effective than beating one's head against it. And infinitely easier on one's head, also.

As a technique, "The Silent Revolution" does not exist in a vacuum: it succeeds or fails depending on the individual leader's reasons for leading, his outlook on solving leadership problems, and the development of his own leadership potential. For this reason, this volume is an attempt not only to describe a technique, but to put it in a total leadership perspective as well: why one leads, how one leads, the effects of that leadership, and the problem of self-renewal.

Much of the inspiration I have received for my belief in the potential of student councils has come from my good fortune in working with Donald Wood, chairman of the Department

of Education at Rice University. I would also like to thank William Wong, principal, and George Arashiro, adviser, who were both helpful to me when I was student body president at Roosevelt High School in Honolulu; William Sweeney, principal, who was immensely patient during my efforts to establish an all-school student council at Rindge Technical School in Cambridge, Mass.; and Walt Dulaney, youth worker and columnist, who provided a number of stimulating ideas on leadership while I was a student in Honolulu.

Many friends and colleagues were kind enough to read the manuscript in its earlier edition. I am indebted to Stephen Nagy, Suzanne Sato, Dave Frick, Janet Rich, Dave Powlison, Brad Ware, Ken Stanley, April Sasaki, Larry Takumi, Worldman Kimm, Dean Thaddeus Seymour of Dartmouth College, and Professor Harvey Mansfield of Harvard. Of course, the contents of this volume are my sole responsibility.

I am also indebted to Dustin Burke and Charles Filson for their encouragement and help in guiding the first edition of *The Silent Revolution* to publication in 1968 at Harvard Student Agencies. This revised edition, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, has benefitted from the attentive eyes and careful critiques of that association's Executive Secretary Owen Kiernan and staff members Thomas Koerner, Robert Fitzsimmons, Robert Gaut, Martha Crawford, Terry Giroux, and Judy Martin.

K.M.K.



## Introduction



The more I see of student councils across the country, the more depressed I become. One meeting I sat in on seemed to be the perfect example of student council pettiness and senselessness. As I entered the room, the "adviser" was running the meeting from the podium—telling the kids how bad they were, and how much they owed to him, their student council adviser. After a while, enough appreciation had presumably sunk in, and the adviser allowed the business of the meeting to begin. And you can imagine how that went.

It's an old story: some council members are power-mad; some love to hear the sound of their own voice no matter what absurdities issue forth; some are jockeying for the next election already; some are blockers ("It'll never work—let's go home."); some go to sleep at each meeting without exception; some laugh through each meeting without exception; some are exceptions entirely in themselves; some are virtual heroes; some are virtual villains; some are just glad to get out of Miss Barnes's English class. The Mr. Beautifuls criticize the Mr. Unbeautifuls; the gaudily-dressed compete for the attention of the opposite sex; Johnny spends the whole 45 minutes trying to slip a note to Billy telling him what Sue told Jane about Jimmy; and the adviser clears his throat every once in a while in a subtle foghorn fashion as if to say: "Careful, students, I'm still here, ahem!" The Friday night dance, which was supposed to have occurred last week, is

again postponed; and at this peak of accomplishment, the meeting finally adjourns.

You either want to laugh or cry. Nothing is happening. *Nothing.*

The effects of these hoaxes which call themselves student councils are bad, sometimes truly tragic. One thing is sure: they are always disturbing to people who know what tremendous potential a student council has for doing really meaningful things. I consider myself one of those people. I believe that student councils have great potential, and that students themselves have much control over how that potential is to be used. I believe that students who want to do something about a hoax can do it, given the proper combination of ideals and technical know-how.

This volume is a plea to end the student council hoax. It is written specifically for high school student council leaders who want to do something meaningful with their student councils—and are willing to go unnoticed, if necessary, in order to do so. It is written for young leaders who are sensitive to the needs of their fellow students and want to respond to those needs.

I hope you are one of these people, because we need you. Your fellow students need you. You have advantages they lack—and will never have, if you keep them all to yourself. If you really want to help other students, you'll find you can do a lot with your time and energy.

I hope to explain *how*.

## PART ONE: THE PIECES

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### *Chapter One*

## That Thing You Call a Student Council

Just try mentioning the student council to the principal, Mr. Turner. His bushy eyebrows jump up, and his eyes begin to narrow. He leans back in his executive chair slowly, the springs creaking. Finally, he ends the deathly silence. "Student council, did you say?" And suddenly you wish you were anywhere else in the world but sitting across from his desk. He's thinking about all the trouble which student councils have gotten him into in the past. You can almost hear his blood pressure rise.

You can try mentioning the student council to Miss Simmons, who has taught English grammar since the preposition was invented. "Well!" she says, dusting off the blackboard and putting her crinkly lecture notes in the drawer. "Well! We didn't have them in my day. I don't see why we need them now." "But Miss Simmons. . . ." you say. "Now, now," she says, "run along. I have work to do." As you turn, she disappears somewhere in the midst of a cloud of chalk dust.

Of course, you can ask Mr. Horace, the football coach. He'll talk to you at least. "Yes, my boy," he says, slapping you on the back, "activities. Fresh air. Running the track. Contact sports. Rough and tumble. Builds character." And then, pulling you aside and lowering his voice: "You aren't serious about that student council stuff, are you, son?"

You can go down the hall and ask your fellow students. You can ask Joe, and he'll stop chewing gum just long

enough to tell you. "Well. . ." he'll say, scratching his head, "the way I figure it, the student council is nothing. I mean, it's a big trip for the people in it, to get their pictures in the newspaper, you know, and get the trophies, and go to all the big dances, and that stuff. But, I mean, it doesn't do anything." And you can ask Sue, but she'll laugh. "The student council thinks that progress is making more money than last year on the cookie sales. Big deal. In a crisis, all they can do is put up posters." If you can catch George coming out of the library, he'll put his bookbag down and tell you: "Sure, people have great ideas when they run for office, but they only want to get elected. After the ballots are counted and they win, they reign instead of serve. They walk around all year feeling big and doing nothing for the students who elected them." "That thing you call a student council," Mary will say with her hands on her hips, "is a farce. A clique. Nice people doing nice things—mainly for each other."

*That thing you call a student council. . .* A lot of people don't believe in it. That means that you *have* to. They'll ask you: is it worth the bother? It's a question you have to be able to answer. Why should people cooperate with the student council if they don't think it's important? As a student council member, you are one of the few people in the school who can tell them how important it *is*.

There's a lot you can say. The first thing you might mention is the importance of the entire activities program—student council, clubs, sports, music, drama, journalism. The activities program has some special things to offer to students. Four points are worth thinking about:

(1) *A book is made of dead wood that has been beaten to a pulp and rolled flat—and a lot of people who read too many of them turn out the same way.* Learning things from books can be an awful bore. Many educators feel that you learn by what you *do*. You learn by acting on knowledge, so that it becomes part of your life experience, instead of somebody else's words on a page. And the activities program is the one part of the school curriculum which focuses on *doing* things.

(2) *In the activities program, the classroom "war" between students and teachers can come to an end.* There is no line between the front of the classroom and the class; the teacher is not lecturing and posing as the source of ultimate truth, and students have nothing to gain by trying to pull the wool over the teacher's eyes. What a relief! Students and teachers can at last work together, with common goals, on common projects. No one is forced to participate; interaction is informal; and the focus is on the pleasure of building, creating, and doing things which both students and teachers enjoy.

(3) *High school students are not marching out into the world to live Latin or geometry.* Only a fifth of the students now in elementary school are likely to graduate from college, and only five percent are likely to go into careers based on the academic disciplines—such as being teachers, writers, re-searchers, consultants, professors. That leaves the other 95 percent of all our students in need of a good way to prepare for a non-academic life. What better thing for them than an excellent activities program? It is clear that all our students are going to have to be some kind of parents, voters, neighbors, taxpayers, church members, employers, or employees. All of our students are going to have to relate, well or badly, to other people in a large and complex society. And the only place in most schools where the skills of working with people and organizations can be learned is the activities program. All educators are fond of saying they are preparing their students for life. For the vast majority of their students, the best way to do that is through the activities program.

(4) *Leaders aren't "born," they are trained.* A country which believes in democracy must have thousands of competent and creative leaders if it is to survive. Personally, I don't think there is anything so desperately needed in our country and the world as people who know how to get along with others and who can help others work together to accomplish common goals. The activities program is the best place in school to begin learning leadership skills. Working on a project with other people, relying on them and they upon

you, putting your heads together to solve problems, coordinating actions—all of these things must be learned through experience, and cannot be too highly valued. The world is getting more and more specialized; it needs people of talent and versatility who know how to pull it together to do things which will benefit everyone—more sensibly and in greater depth than if each tried to do it by himself.

The activities program couldn't be more important. But where does the student council fit into this? Right square on top of it. The student council was designed to supervise the entire activities program.

This doesn't mean that the student council does everything. It means that *the student council should serve as an agent for the student body*. It seeks to identify student interests, and then works with the faculty and administration to develop them. The student council can serve as the crucial link between the student body and the administration in the conduct of school affairs; it can set up clubs and after-school seminars; it can plan the school's social program; it can evaluate the school's facilities and curriculum and make recommendations; it can advise the local school board. *The goal in all its actions is to provide a significant learning experience in itself while developing learning experiences for the student body at large.*

The student council should enhance the atmosphere for learning in the school, and help make school as meaningful as possible for as many students as possible. This means two things: eliminating those things which are distractions to the learning process, and providing those things which encourage it. This is tough, because what contributes to the "atmosphere" is often hard to determine. A vital starting point for action might be the fact that a student must *want* to be in school, or he'll learn very little. Many students who drop out of school do so because there's nothing *in* school that they value. It's your job in the student council to help them find something.\*

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\*This is the subject of a companion edition by the same author, *The Silent Majority: The Problem of Apathy and the Student Council*.

Without losing its own integrity as an independent student activity, the student council can also bridge the gap between the student body and the administration—to the benefit of both. The student council can be a clearinghouse of ideas, complaints, desires, dislikes, and plans for action. In most schools, the student council is the only body which can represent students' wishes while at the same time serving as the only student organization the administration can approach with a suggestion or grievance regarding problems in the school as a whole. The student council can mediate for both the students and the administration: it can be a place for peacefully and reasonably ironing out difficulties and coordinating teamwork plans. This is a very important functional role in the management of school life: leadership in idea creation and idea presentation, and assistance in decision making and decision execution.

Of course, there are many more reasons for having a student council; you will discover and develop your own. You will notice that the ones I have mentioned are centered on *people*: helping people learn, getting people involved in social processes, mediating between people. This idea is important. Every good student council is indeed people-centered. Make sure *yours* is.

## **Brotherly What?**

This book makes a pretty big assumption. It assumes that you care. I mean, really. Not just because it's fashionable to appear concerned for those who are "less fortunate." Not because you know that pretending to care is going to earn you the title of Mr. Nice. Not because the redhead in the next row loves charitable people. No. Something deep, something sincere and real. Being interested in what others think, how they feel, what's important to them, what they need. Being sensitive to the people around you; and when they need something, wanting to help.

You might call it brotherly love, a concern for all men, people-consciousness.

A lot of sentimental hocus-pocus? Maybe. Personally, I am convinced that, unless you really care for the people you are going to lead, you'll never do anything meaningful—except by accident. People-consciousness is a definite prerequisite for good leadership. If you aren't sensitive to the needs of the people you lead, how will you ever be able to answer those needs? Caring is a practical necessity. If you are going to do right by people, you have to be concerned with their welfare.

I would like to enter a plea, here. People-centered student councils need people-conscious leaders. If you find that you are quite indifferent about what the student council does and whether or not it helps or hurts people, please get out. Resign. Your leadership is apt to do more harm than good: it



will exist in a vacuum, or be irrelevant, or even be antagonistic to the needs of your peers. If you don't care, you're not going to help anyone. So unless you have a deep feeling for the welfare of the people you are supposed to lead, please, *stop leading*.

The idea of really caring for others has an important effect on the leader himself. In the Silent Revolution, caring is necessary not only because you must care in order to do relevant and meaningful things; it is also necessary to make your leadership durable. A deep concern for others is one of the few motivations. I'm convinced, that is powerful enough to compensate for the sacrifice—as well as provide the inspiration—for strong and purposeful leadership. Without it, you may be very unhappy and short-lived as a leader.

Essentially, the price tag on the Silent Revolution is that you must give up a lot of ego-satisfaction. As you will see later, you must reconcile yourself to being less noisy, less dramatic, less heroic—and more of a behind-the-scenes mover of events. In the Silent Revolution you must give of your time and effort because you care and want to give, not because you are expecting glory and prominence in return. It is very conceivable, of course, that if you really do something for your student body, they will respect you for it and be glad they elected you. You can be selfless *and* popular, but popularity must not be your goal. Do things because you believe in them, and the simple satisfaction of having achieved them will be enough. (Applause is great, but it's only the frosting, and we've got to bake cakes.) If you're in it for other people, then helping them will give you satisfaction that having your name in lights could never compete with!

Lack of praise or recognition is often a result of using the Silent Revolution. It is comparatively easy to bear; it is a simple kind of self-denial which allows the achievement of greater meaning and satisfaction. Other situations are less easy. Being attacked and mistreated by the people you are trying to help, for example, is a possibility much harder to stomach than a mere lack of recognition. It hurts in particular when you really care for the people who are attacking

you; if you didn't care, you could shrug it off with indifference. And yet, a deep concern for people makes it possible to understand that attack with compassion, and to keep helping. This kind of paradoxical situation can occur often. Indeed, we might list some "Paradoxical Commandments of Leadership":

1. People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. Love them anyway.
2. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.
3. If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.
4. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
5. Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.
6. The biggest men with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.
7. People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway.
8. What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.
9. People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway.
10. Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway.

You'll find that there is no such thing as going through a Silent Revolution just for fun. It's seldom fun. It's tiring,

ridiculously nerve-wracking, demoralizing, and seemingly impossible. You've got to be deeply committed to people—all of them, not just the ones who are nice to you—in order to go through with it. If you're in it for other people, you may not always succeed, but you can be happy in the knowledge that you are doing things which are as meaningful as possible—for both you and the people you're helping. You're working at full potential, so there can be no regrets. You're doing the most you can, as best you can.

One thing can't be overemphasized here: this approach does not require saints, nor does it make martyrs. It requires conscientious leaders, and provides a meaningful leadership style; it requires sensitive leaders, and provides an effective outlet for that sensitivity. Why a saint? Silent Revolutions simply need people who are very *human*. And why a martyr? Silent Revolutions demand a lot, but they give a lot in return. Personally, I'm convinced that if you are helping people for *your* sake and not theirs, you'll never be satisfied; either the "return" in personal glorification won't come or, if it does, it won't for long appease a constantly growing ego. If you're out for glory you'll never have enough, and you'll never be happy.

On the other hand, if you really care and want to help, then a lack of recognition is no great tragedy. To the contrary, it can be a very satisfying approach—you do things because they are valid in themselves, not because they are calculated to bring so many votes and so much glory. If meaning and significance have anything to do with happiness—and I think they do!—then the Silent Revolutionary is one of the happiest leaders around. Who's a martyr? Silent Revolutions can give deep-feeling leaders a deeply satisfying leadership experience. You can buy glory and recognition; you can't buy meaning. Satisfaction has to come from inside. Newspaper headlines can't give it to you.

The price of leading a Silent Revolution is high, but well worth paying. To pay it back with interest, try some real brotherly love. It can be the happiest thing that ever happens to you.

## Getting Properly Angry

If you really care for people, you will get upset when they are mistreated or in need. Hopefully, you will get angry. For anger is the catalyst, the call to action, the stimulus which says: "This is something we've got to correct," and says it in bright letters and flashing neon lights.

If you aren't moved, you'll never get moving. So *please* get angry.

When you get angry, do it properly, by all means. First of all, get *really* angry. A deep anger, a slow-burning, smouldering kind of anger. None of this flash-in-the-pan stuff—you know, angry one minute and laughing the next. It's got to last. It's got to strike a chord stronger than the "nobody-loves-me-and-lunch-was-bad" kind of thing that comes and goes each day. It's got to be deep, so that the catalyst will be there for a long, long time. Most problems worthy of real anger aren't going to be solved overnight—so be deep.

When you get angry, do it quietly. Not an out-of-control, bitter, flying wrath that leaves a trail of broken furniture and regrets. Show your anger by actions designed to solve the problem, not by loud and noisy expositions of your emotions. Somehow being noisy about your anger makes you feel as though you've *done* something about the situation—which is deceiving. Restrict most of your expression to actions. Say little, do a lot. Action speaks louder than words.

Another reason for keeping silent about your anger is that constant expositions of it will easily become a matter of

self-righteousness. Avoid self-righteousness like the plague. Nothing gets progress bogged down faster than people who are more interested in their own purity than in doing anything important. It easily escalates into a contest of who can be more righteous than someone else, and in the end, nothing gets done—which isn't righteous at all. Please ignore the "holier than thou" stuff. It's irrelevant, and obstructive.

Most important, get angry *about issues* and not *at people*. People are proponents of various sides of issues, or participants in various problems—but as such, it is the issue and the problem which deserve your attention, not those "horrible people" who disagree with you. You may quite naturally dislike or distrust individuals who take a certain stand, but attacking the individual is beside the point—you've got to attack the stand. This is one case where it is definitely bad to get "personal." It develops unnecessary animosity and friction, and it proves nothing.

If the issue is a big one, it will still be there when the opposing parties are gone. If the issue is a small and simple one, the hard feelings will remain long after the problem is solved. Either way, attacking individuals is a waste of energy and it doesn't affect the outcome—except to get in the way and make it harder to be fair and reasonable in your dealings. Getting personal merely distorts the issue.

Fight the issue itself, and allow people who might have been enemies to change their minds and become friends. If you're right, they'll know it, and will appreciate being able to change their stands gracefully. Remember: an opponent on this issue may be your only ally on the next one. Treat him like a friend. He probably *is*.

In short, go out and get angry—properly.

## **Becoming a Strong Leader**

You are ready to take action. You believe in student councils, you are motivated by brotherly love, and a deep kind of anger is prodding you to get started. What you need now is a way of channeling this drive through yourself, a way of transforming your beliefs into words and deeds which will have the greatest possible positive effect. In short, you want to be a strong leader.

Many people believe that a strong leader is always unbending; he never lets anyone forget he is in command; he keeps the reins tight; in general, he bulldozes his way through life like a rhinoceros in a porcelain closet. This is wrong. A strong leader is one who is flexible, and knows how to use the right leadership techniques at the right time.

### **Matching Moods**

Each group is different. This means that in each group you may need to assume a different role. If a group is small and seems bored, your role might be to focus attention on individual members, asking them their views, and quietly listening. (People will rarely be as bored with themselves as they might be with you.) If the group is large and has many ideas, but is very divided in its views, your role would be to preside as impartially as possible, and to organize the group so that it can make an acceptable decision. (The enthusiasm and ideas

are there; the ability to come to a decision is not.) In a group of any size, if the enthusiasm is there but the ideas are not, your role would be to provide some concrete suggestions. (The group wants to move, but doesn't know where.)

In each case, you have to be asking yourself: what do this meeting, this group, these people need in order to come to a decision and take action? It is your job to provide the missing link, to remove the stumbling blocks, to focus the viewpoints so that action can be taken. As a leader, you have to be aware of the way in which a discussion is taking place, as well as what is being said. If you can move to match the needs of each group with your own services, a better group decision will be made.

Matching moods with a group is particularly important because you won't be as effective if the group considers you "foreign." If its members are thinking very seriously about something, and you waltz in laughing and making jokes, you are being "anti-group." The same would be true if the group were having a hilarious time, and you tried to be very serious. In each case, you would be saying—by your actions—that you considered the group's own mood and attitude to be unimportant. People don't want to be led by someone who doesn't respect them enough to allow them their own attitudes. To lead a group, you have to become identified with it. You have to show your commitment to the group, even if you aren't committed to what most of the group believes. You're like the engine which has to back up to the train and hook up, before it can move forward. In many cases, "hooking up" means becoming a part of the mood of the group itself.

Once the group senses that you accept its importance, it will accept you into it. And that's when the most effective leadership can occur. Being inside the group, you are closer to its pivotal center, and you have a better chance of giving it new direction. You start with the prevailing mood or attitude and develop it. Leadership may be like a piece of string: you make sure that when you pull, your leadership is attached to something.

## The Shifting Sand

Groups are fickle. They are born, live, and die while changing their minds and moods. During every meeting, the sands will shift, and the inattentive leader can suddenly find himself run aground, left high and dry, while the group moves on. One of your biggest challenges as a leader is to develop the antennae which will tell you, almost intuitively, what kind of leadership techniques are right at what times. You must always be thinking ahead of the group, and watching it develop, so that you can step in with decisive action at the most crucial time.

There is a lot of talk about different leadership styles, such as the "dictator" (running everything himself), the "laissez-faire" (letting things happen by themselves), and the "democratic" (letting people have their say, but keeping the group under control). Some people feel there is a single style which is the "right" one. In general, we favor the democratic leader. But it is likely that during a single meeting, you will find yourself in all three roles—plus a few more of your own.

You might begin a meeting with the laissez-faire style of leadership, letting people express themselves, with some rambling, and an absence of pressure. This period is the most valuable to you as a leader, because it gives you the best chance to sum up what the real concerns of the group happen to be. You do more listening, and less acting. You begin to formulate in your mind the actions which you plan to take later when you assume more active leadership of the group. When you sense that the members of the group have pretty much played out their most important notions, you can begin to move for more control of the group as presiding officer. You become the democratic leader, gradually adding more shape and form to the group's ramblings. You can move with confidence in this stage because you have already allowed the group to sound itself out; now, when you restrict discussion and begin to channel it, you have a good idea that you are channeling it in the direction which the group really wants to go. And then, when the decision is being made, you



become dictator, and decide the vote for the "ayes" over the "nays" and appoint a committee chairman to carry out the decided task. At this point, the dictatorial approach is appropriate, because the group has decided what it wants; if its will is to be effective, the decision must be strictly carried out.

The goal of your leadership techniques should be to guarantee as much freedom and participation as possible in making decisions, and as much discipline and efficiency as possible in carrying them out. To do this, you will need to match the moods and fill the needs of each group with a wide repertory of leadership styles. Groups are alive and always changing; and to be strong, leaders must be alive and changing, too.

## On Being Eminently Practical

### Goal-Orientation

As a strong leader with a real concern for people you begin to take action. But *what* action? The first guideline I would like to suggest is simple. I call it *goal-orientation*.

One thing is painfully obvious, and that is that motivation is not enough. You can't just *want* to do right, and always end up doing it. It is no help at all to escort an old lady across the street when she doesn't want to go. And what is the sense of jumping into the water to save a drowning victim when you can't swim yourself? Clearly, there must be more to it than just desire.

Goal-orientation means employing only those actions which are really relevant to the achievement of the specific end you have in mind. This is very simple on the surface, but it is one of the points which is so easy to confuse in the midst of a campaign. Unless your actions are consistent with the goal, and are channeled *toward* that goal, you may dictate your own defeat. You may get so far away from your aims and objectives that you lose sight of them, or you may do things which destroy the *possibility* of achieving them in the future. For example, ask yourself: will you achieve your goal faster by calling your opponent monstrous things? And do you facilitate your goals by picketing the opposition, causing them to resist and harden their stand all the more? If you

don't like a teacher, does it make sense to spite your own education by refusing to cooperate with her? If you don't like the food in the cafeteria, do you boycott it so it will have less money to buy better food with? If you don't think there's enough free speech in the school, should you make so much noise that you get suspended and then can't talk to anybody about anything? Large and small, significant or trivial, these kinds of questions must constantly be asked.

How can I best serve my goals? It is a question which is often hard to answer, but one which you can't afford to ignore. A loving and willing heart must be guided by reason and know-how, or the real helpfulness will be only mediocre at best, and tragic at worst. No matter how much you want to help, you may only hurt people unless you know what you're doing. First, you must mean well; then, you must *do* well—for the sake of the people you're trying to help. Doing well means doing relevant and effective things. If you can't translate your concern and desire to help into concrete benefits to the people you're concerned about, then the meaning of your motivation is sadly lost. Don't let it be! Make sure your actions are goal-oriented; make sure you deliver what the customer needs. He'll appreciate it.

### Getting at the Source

Everyone faces restrictions on their actions—students, teachers, principals, boards of education. This means that some people who would like to help you with a project may not be able to. Perhaps the principal would like to open the campus, but the school board has set a policy prohibiting it. Perhaps the school board would like to revamp the curriculum and graduation requirements, but the state board prohibits it. Perhaps the state board would like to change the legal responsibilities of the teacher, but state law prohibits it. And so on. The sources of authority lie in different places on different issues.

One of the first things to do, then, in taking action, is to try to analyze where the power rests. Who has the final say?

What kinds of pressure or information does that person or group have to face when it makes its own decisions? In most cases, your principal can make the decision, but even so, he will be implementing guidelines laid down by the school board and legislature. Begin by getting copies of the school code so you can better understand the situation which both you and your principal face.

One thing is important to remember: in American education, the people who have the final say are the members of the community at large. The voters—including your parents. Unfortunately, some students would be willing to talk to anyone in the world except their parents—but it is parents who have the last say in elections. If the principal is opposed to a student council plan because five parents have called up to tell him they don't like it, then make sure that you organize six parents (how about your own?) to call up and say the plan is wonderful. If the school board defeats a reform that your council is backing because 30 parents showed up at the meeting and condemned it, then organize your own group of parents (how about your PTA?) to show up and explain the merits of the reform. If the state board is not willing to listen to your school's plight because they have hundreds of other schools to worry about, then organize those hundreds of other schools (how about your state student council association?) to back you up. Public officials in America have to be responsive to the majority of the people. If you can organize that majority, you will *be* the prime source of power for all the changes you are seeking.

There is a lot to do right now in your own school, without campaigning in the community at large. But if a problem develops that seems to be blocking a number of your projects, then don't give up before you come in full contact with the source of the blockage. Take your battle to the field where it can be won.

### Necessary Assumptions

There are some necessary assumptions, it seems to me, that

you must have if you are going to deal with people both happily and successfully. Let me list a few of them:

1. People are more important than things.
2. The people I work with are neither angels nor monsters but human beings basically like myself, differing mostly in degrees of talent and experience.
3. Most people want very much to do what they feel is right.
4. I should always try to *understand* people, rather than pass judgment on them.
5. In general, it costs me nothing to give the other fellow the benefit of the doubt.
6. The decisions I make are based on my opinions, which may be wrong, and my knowledge, which may be insufficient.

The idea that people are more important than things is easy to forget, particularly in a society where the Almighty Dollar and materialistic possessions are so central. We keep forgetting that, theoretically, governments, schools, labor-saving machinery, student councils, dollars, and so on—are all there to serve people. The more served, the better. Oddly enough, the one thing that so many people need most is not to be equated with red tape or dollar signs or new inventions: most people need other people. In your own student council, don't let those dollar signs and red tape and what-have-you get in the way of helping your peers. It may be a tradition to have a special Hinkleberry Octavius April Fool's Day Gala Dance, but if you charge \$15 per student and only 12 people come, it would behoove you to either change it so it can be a morale-builder for the entire student body, or get rid of it. It is only a "thing," and people are more important than traditional "things." At the same time, a program of students

tutoring fellow students in academic subjects may seem like a lot of charitable nonsense. It certainly lacks prestige—no great expenditures, no ancient and hallowed standing committee to run it, no smashing publicity, just a couple of guys sitting around talking about biology. But it is this kind of thing that student councils should be all about: people helping people.

The idea that the people you work with are neither angels nor monsters is crucial, particularly in working with teachers and the principal. Rumors have been circulating recently that teachers and principals are human. Indeed, though it is still only a matter of hearsay, this rumor seems to be true. After all, what is an adult but a grown-up teenager? Principals and teachers just don't have time to be either angels or monsters. Being human is a full-time job for everybody: teachers, students, milkmen, athletes, financial czars, and poolroom attendants.

What's worse, rumors indicate that even the nastiest principal in the annals of school history is, deep down inside, doing what he thinks is right. Of course, you may not think he is very smart, or courteous, or enlightened as to the virtues of his students, and so on. But he is still probably sincere. Don't get angry with him, but help him become educated—not by telling him how things ought to be, but by showing him that you are sincere and on the ball yourself.

If a teacher or principal persists in being "unenlightened," don't run around muttering under your breath and cursing the world. Try to understand *why* that person behaves the way he does. Don't judge him or her as being dumb or mean or evil or monstrous. Remember: some people have had different experiences with certain things, others have illnesses, others know more than you do, others have a passionate dislike for marmalade, and so on. There is a multitude of factors that go into making an individual behave the way he does. Condemning people doesn't help. Don't judge; try to understand.

And if you can't possibly understand a certain kind of behavior—well, what does it cost to give the other guy the

benefit of the doubt? There may be something going on in his or her life or profession that you don't have the least inkling about, and it won't hurt you to assume that there is a valid reason for the behavior you are witnessing. This goes for your fellow students as well. Whether you agree with their thoughts and actions or not, you can understand and perhaps even help. At any rate, you'll only cause people more problems by trampling all over them for no good reason. Quite often, insensitivity causes more damage than intentional harm. Be sensitive and compassionate, for your sake and everybody else's.

In all this, please remember our last assumption: you and I, just like everyone else, possess opinions, biases, facts, and general knowledge which may be partially or totally false. A realization of this factor is not meant to cause one to give up and say, "Well, I guess we shouldn't do anything at all, because it will never be completely correct." Not at all, We *have* to marshal as many facts and opinions as we can and make decisions based on them. We *have* to come up with the best answers we can and try to put them into effect. But not with the idea that they are Final Truth, Generally and Specifically Impregnable. We can allow ourselves only a set of "tentative conclusions." When new knowledge comes to light, we have to be flexible. So add a dash of humility to the next decision. In the long run, it will taste better that way. It will also help you to respect other people's opinions right now, in the short run. If we might be wrong, others might be right—no matter how disconcerting that thought may be!

### The Insecure Life of Intellectual Honesty

Another guideline I'd like to suggest is something we might call "intellectual honesty." The key to intellectual honesty, as I see it, is recognition of the fact that the world is primarily gray, not all black and white. That means that taking absolute stands on many issues is merely a matter of running away from them. Extreme, absolute, black-and-white answers are an easy way out because you don't have to think; you

just plug in a formula. Granted, it takes more nerve—but most issues today are complex, and must be faced in their full complexity.

Nowhere, perhaps, are formulas more interesting in their effects than in the realm of ethics. For example, if the statement were made, "What this country needs is absolute morality," most people wouldn't question it. But intellectual honesty demands closer scrutiny. In all sincerity, what is absolute morality? We really don't know. Every part of the country has a slightly different set of conventions for moral and immoral behavior. Each person's conception of absolute morality may be different from the next man's even when they're from the *same* part of the country.

Let's assume that absolute morality means such things as "don't tell lies," a statement which is pretty clearly understood by most people. As a general rule, "don't tell lies" is extremely important and ought to be followed. But as an *absolute*? What happens if a killer is loose and he wants to shoot your brother? Obviously, it would be quite reasonable for you to lie about his whereabouts. Lying isn't good, but saving your brother's life is far more important. Absolute morality wouldn't allow us to tell a falsehood to save a life: lies are lies, and that is that. It is better to let your brother die than tell a lie. Is this the kind of thing we want? No, of course not.

The above example is a bit extreme, but it makes the point clear—to be practical, we need more flexibility than an *absolute* gives us. This fact is recognized often in our daily lives, when we talk about "fibbing" or telling "white lies" to keep from hurting people's feelings or giving away a secret of some sort.

Intellectual honesty is insecure because there are no easy formulas to rest on. You often don't have the answers, and have to admit it—quite unlike the absolutist who is secure thinking he has all the answers wrapped around his little finger, and goes around wondering how anybody could be so dumb as to not agree with him. But the absolutist doesn't do much thinking and, if you don't think and try to grasp the



real complexity of a problem, you'll never be able to *solve* that problem. Problems which exist in the gray must be understood in the gray if they are to be solved.

In short, the minute you think you have all the answers, don't. You'll stop thinking and learning and adapting--pre-requisites for progress! There's no reason to worry if you don't have all the answers. Just don't sit there complacently as if you *did!*

### Words, Words, Words

In general, words are a pain. You have to use the right ones with the right meanings. You have to spell them correctly. You have to use them in correct combinations. You have to take special connotations into account: words won't even stand still for you. The phobia for them which began back in kindergarten with Miss Murphy's primer is always with us. And yet, they are the most valuable tool the leader has to work with.

As you increase your ability to communicate--through both written and spoken words--try to keep in mind one particular category of vocabulary. Every leader ought to have several non-committal words and phrases to be employed constantly as substitutes for negative words. For example, instead of saying, "That's a lousy idea," and killing the discussion, you can say, "Well, let's take a look at John's idea," or "There's a suggestion that would bear investigation," or some such. This compliments the person who made the suggestion, without committing the group to accepting his idea. An atmosphere will be created in which people are more willing to speak up and, at the same time, the group is completely free to move in the direction it chooses.

The idea is to make as pleasant a comment as you can, without disavowing your own opinion and without hurting other people's feelings. If someone asks you what you think about an idea, there are scads of words you can use in this

fashion: "interesting," "unique," "different," "new," "thoughtful," and so on. "What do you think of such-and-such?" "Well, it's certainly an interesting idea. . . . I'm glad it was brought up. . . . It's well worth considering." Even when you are directly disagreeing with a person, you can retain this same tone. "I don't think I really understand your point" or "I don't think I see it the same way" are a lot more favorable to continuing a discussion than "You're wrong" or "That's a stupid thing to say."

While you're in a discussion, remember: words can help you leave the back door open for yourself and for your opponent. "To the best of my knowledge," or "Based on these assumptions," or "I don't know, but I got the impression that," or "I know that some people feel"—phrases such as these are invaluable. It is a recognition, first of all, of one of our basic assumptions: that our opinions or ideas may be wrong. If they turn out to be wrong, having recognized this possibility makes it easier on us; also, if you are asserting a "truth," these phrases and others like them can make that assertion less blatant and harsh-sounding to others, without reducing the content of the statement.

It is a wonderful thing to be open and intimate with people, but it is probably only possible to be that way with a few people you love and understand—and who love and understand you. You will want to be sincere and attentive in your dealings with people, but it will be on very rare occasions that you can "say exactly what you think" without hurting someone. Civilization is probably a thin veneer, and kind words are one of the few ways we have to protect it.

Words can't be over-rated. They're one of those little ways to help you get along with other people and live with yourself at the same time: to tell the truth, but not make it a slap in the face to the people who are listening. If an idea is bad, it will be obvious sooner or later. Let your words soften your stand now, and thus soften the defeat of opposing stands later. Nothing is lost regarding the issue itself and much can be gained in terms of human relations.

Words, words, words. Who needs them? Leaders do!

## Mini-Maxims

There are many mini-maxims, which when totaled become maxi-maxims. (But that may be skirting the issue.) A few are listed below:

1. *Be a realistic optimist.* Begin with the idea that it can be done; follow up with a realistic idea of what the obstacles will be. The optimism puts a positive "can do" attitude into the project, and the realism gives it a chance of succeeding.
2. *Success has a way of producing more success.* Start with little successes and work up. Just make sure they are relevant to real needs and problems.
3. *When you're working with people, find areas of agreement and expand them.* People are always shocked to learn how much they have in common. You can be the one to break the news to them.
4. *Listening may be enough.* A lot of people will just want you to know all the troubles they have—even if you can't do anything about it. Listening sympathetically may be all these people want from you; and though it may not seem like it, you *are* helping them.
5. *Promise something less; deliver something more.* Promise less than you may be able to deliver. Other people will make their own plans based on your expectations so, if the bottom falls out, you'll be glad you didn't promise The World. On the other hand, if things go all right, every one will be happy when you deliver more than you guaranteed.
6. *Ask crucial questions at the right time.* If the principal is tired and harried, he won't want to hear too many new, wild-sounding student council proposals. If possible, try to see people when they seem fresh, or relaxed, or most open to new ideas. Also, pick the right time of year, not only the right time of day, for more long-range plans.
7. *Get the key people involved.* A lot of people are more concerned about whether or not they were "in" on an idea than whether or not it is a good one. People want

to call an idea "theirs," particularly if it looks like it will pass, and become a policy. By and large, the involvement of key people will make the program go smoother, and be more fun and instructive all the way around. Get them involved as early as possible and as much as possible, without losing control over the situation. (Note: the reason a lot of representative assemblies are ineffective is that the ideas that representatives are supposed to take back to their homerooms were decided in the executive council and just presented to the assembly for rubber stamping; thus, the idea was not "their" idea, and they are not likely to campaign to carry it out in their homerooms.)

8. *Give credit where credit is due.* Everyone likes to be recognized when he does a good job, and recognizing good work is a way to ensure there will be more of it. Be generous in your distribution of praise. You're not doing it all by yourself, so don't make it look that way!
9. *Get your facts straight.* It's always embarrassing to go charging off after someone, only to discover that your information is completely wrong. Hearsay, confounded by the prejudices of each person who reports it, undermines the truth. Don't make any decisions without going to the source of the rumor and pinpointing what really happened. Otherwise, you won't even be asking the right questions—much less coming up with the right answers.
10. *Talk with people individually.* This can be especially important when talking with an opponent. People often behave differently when they're in a group: behavior changes, opinions change, and so on. Talk with people individually and take away the group pressure; listen to each person much more as he really is.
11. Above all, always remember: *the janitor runs the school.*

### Sinking in the Same Boat

As long as we're being eminently practical, there is one

point which must be made clear. As hard as it may be to believe at times, the fact is that you, the student council, the teachers, and the principal, are all there at school for the same purposes: to educate young men and women; to make school an interesting and purposeful period in each of their lives; to prepare them for new challenges and tasks after they leave high school.

You're all in it together. No matter how much you think that a teacher or principal is your forsworn and eternal enemy, the fact is that they are there to help you. Let me assure you, they're not there for their own fun and games. Teaching is not easy, and it usually doesn't pay well. If they were in it for their own selfish reasons, they'd be miles away in some other job. But they aren't. They're trying to help you learn.

That's what the student council can help by improving the morale and lessening the distractions in school—the process of learning. And that's what the student council is in itself—a certain kind of learning.

So who can afford to be enemies of whom? You've all got the same goals. Furthermore, if one of you fails, the others can't be totally successful. If students don't want to learn, if school doesn't interest them, then the teachers can't really help them learn. (You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink if he's not thirsty.) On the other hand, if students want to learn and the teachers are no good, the process is still a failure. (You can lead a horse to water, but if the well's dry, he'll just stand around getting thirsty.) The student council can help by promoting school harmony through its activities, and by providing new kinds of learning experiences in its activities and projects, as well as by encouraging study along academic lines. Minimizing friction and maximizing the atmosphere for learning is crucial. (You can lead a horse to water, but if there are 1200 other horses fighting over it, he may not get a drink—he may get hooved to death.)

Students, teachers, principals, student councils—the goals, interests, and concerns of all are intermixed. You can't harm

one without harming the others. The next time you think Miss Barnes or Principal Doe is really terrible, just remember: you're all in the same boat and, if the boat is sinking, you're all sinking with it. So get your bucket out and start bailing. Bail for all you're worth. If you don't, you and your student council may not be worth *anything*. Keep that boat from sinking—and, if you can, make it watertight.

It is logical enough that people with the same goals ought to work together as a team. Try to set up that kind of teamwork in your own school. Establish a working relationship with teachers, principals, and students alike.

Be sure to have frequent contacts with the principal and student council adviser. Give them a chance to express their views. Don't make every meeting a meeting of crises for either of you. Go to see them often enough that you're not always bringing a problem or a demand with you. If it gets to the point that the principal can say, "Oh, here he is again. Another sticky problem, another unbelievable crisis," you've lost your effectiveness as well as your welcome! Let the principal or adviser be happy to see you. After all, you're part of the same team, and morale is important.

But the student council must not only communicate with the principal and adviser, it must communicate with the student body as well. That always *sounds* easy, but think about it. Do you really know the "average" student in your school? My guess is that you don't. It is so easy to go around with 10 or 20 kids who are just like yourself, and ignore the other 95 percent of the student body. When was the last time you spoke up for the so-called "little man" on campus? When was the last time you even knew what the "little man" was interested in? You may not feel comfortable around your school's beatniks, hot-rodders, hippies, motorcycle kings, near-drop-outs, or professional delinquents—but the fact is, you're all members of the same crew on the same boat, together. Of course, there ought to be a good man at the helm—but, unless the helmsman has someone to row, no one will get anywhere. I'll bet that the "little man" in your school isn't so "little." The odds are, he has as much muscle for rowing as you do.

If you want to keep your boat afloat, you're going to have to walk the deck in a lot of other people's shoes for a while, no matter how sore your feet get. You won't get far bailing if your leadership bucket has holes in the bottom. You've got to find those holes and patch them up, eliminate them. Keep in touch with all the members of the team: teachers, principals, students, advisers, hippies, athletes, honor students—all of them. It's really the only way. Otherwise, you'll capsize in the first storm. And believe me, the water is cold. *Really cold.\**

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\*See *The Silent Majority* by Kent M. Keith, chapters 1-6, for a more complete discussion of reaching all the different groups in your school.

## PART TWO: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

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### Chapter Six

## The Silent Revolution

The Silent Revolution is a leadership technique, characterized most specifically by persistence and compromise. It is designed to bring about change as quickly, quietly, and reasonably as possible.

Persistence is easier said than done. You can probably recite countless times when you worked weeks and months to get even the simplest things accomplished. It's easy to stop trying—especially when there is no guarantee that you'll get what you want even if you stick it out. But without persistence, most of what you try to do will fail. Most student council work is not an open-and-shut case; it requires real vigilance to see it through. So be persistent.

Always remember: *People resist change.* Any kind of change. Even if something is good, if it's *new*, people will want time to get used to it. It makes sense; people know how things are now. The future, on the other hand, is unpredictable. Why should people trade a sure thing for something which is unproven (as all really new things are)? People resist change because the status quo is usually "safe." They are accustomed to it. Why change? Things might get worse, for all they know.

Persistence is the simplest weapon for bringing about change: you just keep a proposal before people long enough that they become accustomed to the ideas and begin to identify them with the status quo. Actually executing the proposal may be revolutionary, but if the idea has been mulling around in the atmosphere for a while, it will seem like an



expected and natural result of "normalcy." Acceptance can be a result of good exposure.

For long-range plans, persistence allied with the "drop of water" approach can get the job done. Perhaps you have some big changes in mind. Take them slowly, step by step. Let them work to your advantage. The odds are, if you try to fill the bucket with a blasting faucet, someone will turn the faucet off. Let your bucket fill slowly, a few drops at a time, and in a while it will be full.

Quite often, each little step will have to be fought for—and compromise enters the picture. This art, compromise, is perhaps best seen in concrete situations, so let's take an example. Let's put the Silent Revolution into action.

Welcome to Archibald J. Gramlich High School. Gramlich High has 544 students (or 543, depending on whether or not Johnny Crassenbad finally gets suspended). The principal is Mr. Horatio Mandelbaum, who has been at Gramlich for 34 years. He has often been heard telling students that he was the principal when their parents went to Gramlich, and that he will still be principal when their children go to Gramlich—and no one challenges the statement. He is a venerated part of the school and community.

The community of Gramlich itself is rather small. The town has a bowling alley, three grocery stores, a movie theater, four churches, two restaurants, and a hamburger joint. For additional excitement, citizens of Gramlich journey to nearby Andersonville, a city of 20,000. Andersonville has ice cream parlors.

The students complain a lot about the council. It's a hoax, but it's not their fault, they say. It's Mr. Mandelbaum. He's a tyrant. And the student council adviser, Miss Smithies. She's an old hag. It's all a conspiracy. Students aren't allowed to do anything. They try, but it's not *their* fault.

Okay. You are the new student council president, and you want to see some major changes. How? You draw up a plan for action, a Silent Revolution. Since you are armed with some basic assumptions about people, you begin by realizing that Mr. Mandelbaum is not a tyrant and Miss Smithies is not a hag. Furthermore, your student council is not a hoax primarily because of them. It is a hoax because some students

want it that way, and others don't know how to make it any better.

You realize that the limit to what your student council can do is set mostly by the strength and responsibility of the council itself. Admittedly, Mr. Mandelbaum and Miss Smithies may have a misconception as to the purpose and potential of the student council. But to blame them is only a lame way of defending the council's own inaction and irresponsibility. Obviously, principals do set restrictions and state departments of education do make rulings on many kinds of student activities. Student councils, even the very best of them, are told "no," to be sure. But for the most part, that "no" is merely a reflection of the opinion which the principal has of student councils in general and yours in particular. If the principal thinks your council is a bunch of no-good bums who aren't willing to work and are grossly irresponsible—well, then, why should he ever say "yes"? You've got to prove to him that the council is responsible and constructive, that it can play a helpful and important role in school life.

Hmmm. Prove the council's worth. But how? It's a vicious circle. You have to do something good to prove you can do things, but you aren't allowed to do things because you've never done anything that was good. How do you break into the circle and get started? The only thing to do is to start with something small and build from there. Make each little task a success, and keep going—bigger and better all the time. Do everything that you do well, and sooner or later Mr. Mandelbaum can't help but have confidence in you. Where do you start? Remember that we said you, the student council, the teachers, the students, and the principal, are all in it together. You want more responsibility, more rights in the school community—this would be a benefit to you. Why not start by doing a few things which might be beneficial to the other members of the team?

Go talk with Mr. Mandelbaum. Talk with Miss Smithies. What can the student council do to help alleviate some of their problems? What are they concerned about? Mr. Mandelbaum wants people to regulate lunch lines, doesn't have money to buy a new movie projector, wants someone to administer the parking regulations, and is concerned about

school spirit. Now, it isn't the student council's job to run the school: maybe it would be best to stay out of the projector-buying and parking supervision. (Your student council can be useful without being used. Usually, it is not your function to administer regulations you had no part in formulating.) But school spirit—there's a clear issue for your council. And even unruly lunch lines could be given some attention. Take the problems that are closest to the purposes of the student council, and go ahead. In any school, there is a lot to be done. You can afford to do something which *both* the council and the principal or adviser are interested in!

Okay, you've got an issue—school spirit. Your poor football team hasn't heard a spirited cheer in 12 years, and Mr. Mandelbaum is understandably upset. If you're going to lose to Andersonville every year, the least you can do is to go down fighting. "There's no dishonor in losing, if you do it with spirit, proudly," Mr. Mandelbaum is often heard to say. At Gramlich, however, most of the students leave the game before the end of the third quarter—and the cheering section leaves before that. Only Joe Skinner stays for the finish of the game. He tells Mary Ferguson about it, and then the whole school knows.

Your first problem, given the nature of the situation, is the membership of the student council itself. Needless to say, it is important to get your most enthusiastic people involved in the project—and they may not be on the council at all. If no one on the council is excited about the proposition, go get someone in the student body at large and make him your committee chairman. Even if you do have a couple of "movers" on your student council, get as many non-council people involved as possible. Your project won't succeed without broad support anyway. Remember: it's a project *by* the student council, but *for* the student body and the school as a whole. In this respect it is important to remember that what the student body needs and what the student council thinks the student body needs may be quite different things.

Let's say you develop a Pep Club, and a special cheering section: card tricks, special yells, badges, banners, and the whole works. For the first time in 12 years a mighty cheer rises up from the stands, and the football team nearly goes crazy. They are so inspired, they lose by the smallest gap in

Gramlich history. Mr. Mandelbaum grins from ear to ear for days. Gramlich really gave it to them, boy. A lot more students are bound to turn out for the team next fall—and then we'll show them!

Well, it's a long road from Pep Clubs to "The Student Council as a Dynamic Force in School Affairs." But probably not as long a road as you think. You've accomplished one thing at least: Mr. Mandelbaum and Miss Smithies respect you now.

But your student council never has any money. You spend your whole year raising money or doing nothing because you have none. Student councils weren't meant to be fund-raising organizations. In Andersonville, they charge a small amount at the beginning of the year as "dues" for the student council. Then, during the year, this money is returned in the form of "free" activities and projects. Such a system would be the council's Emancipation Proclamation in regard to financial limitations.

You go and talk with Miss Smithies. She is opposed to the plan, because many students in the school aren't well off financially, and it would be hard for them to pay a lot of extra fees during registration. She suggests you talk with Mr. Mandelbaum. He is opposed to the plan because it would slow down registration and add more bookkeeping work to the tasks of the already-overloaded school secretary. You discuss the matter with the council, and find that several members would be willing to do the bookkeeping during registration to take the load off the secretary. Other members suggest that the dues be kept very low, just enough to cover operating costs like paper, mimeograph stencils, posters, paint, and so on. Beyond that, each activity would be expected to pay for itself through charging for participation.

Miss Smithies agrees, and then Mr. Mandelbaum. Next fall, the incoming student council will have a little operating capital, and be freed from some of the usual financial agonies. Okay—you have won the confidence of the school administration through your work with school spirit, and now you've gained a little more organizational freedom.

But what you really want to do is to break the "static school atmosphere." You want to have some good assemblies; sponsor some popular discussion groups; broaden the

representation of the student council; increase student control over elections; have some good informal dances; set up orientation activities for the new underclassmen each fall; establish a system of intramural sports; and, in general, provide meaningful outlets for the interests of as many students as possible. World politics, cars, singing, woodworking, drama, calculus, literature, photography, French, sports—all can be encouraged and fostered by a student council. But not if it doesn't try to find out what others are interested in.

The thing which presses down upon you the hardest is that the way your council is now organized, it is especially hard to find out what the majority of the student body *is* interested in. Seniors dominate the membership numerically as well as psychologically, and students need nearly an "A" average to be eligible for office at all. The Council thus represents about 10 percent of the senior class—a sad state of affairs when there is a whole school to consider. As president, you can't help but think that the council is really out of touch, and you want to do something about it: reapportion the council's membership. You want to change the student council constitution so that each grade level will have equal representation on the council, based on the size of each class. This measure will give a more democratic representation to each grade level, and hopefully, it will result in a less distorted student council. Larger classes will now be getting the representation they deserve.

This change is radical for the Gramlich High student council, which has existed as a feudal society lorded over by the seniors in collusion with the king—or principal. It will be hard to bring about a change of this magnitude. In particular, though the lower grades are larger, the upper grades dominate the council—and the council must pass the constitutional amendment. The council membership is: seniors, 16; juniors, 12; sophomores, 8; freshmen, 4. Obviously, the seniors aren't going to want to give up their "seniority," as it were. You can already hear them saying "Who cares about all this democracy jazz? Freshmen are dumb. Do you want them to have as many votes as the *seniors*? You're asking for a dumb student council." You also discover that it was Mr. Mandelbaum—yes, when he started 34 years ago—who set up the student council this way. Finally, Miss Smithies is not anxi-

ous to disagree with Mr. Mandelbaum, because he has hinted lately about making her a new department chairman.

Well, it doesn't look so good. Okay—time for strategy. Think. You've got to convince the council, and then the adviser and principal, and finally, the entire student body. The council is dominated by seniors, the student body is dominated by persuasive upperclassmen, and the principal and adviser just dominate in general.

A key point to remember here is that the adage, "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," can often be disastrous. All the people in this situation *interact*: most problems are thus not linear chain reactions (like dominoes toppling each other in a straight line), but slow buildups of common consensuses, which means a lot of bridges being crossed at the same time—slowly; taking account of all the different interactions as you go.

Saying that you ought to start crossing all of your bridges at once is a little vague. In this case, it means there are four factors to watch: the principal, the adviser, the student council, and the student body, all of which must give their approval to your plan, and all of which interact with each other in the decision-making process. The principal is influenced by what the adviser thinks because the adviser is on the scene; the adviser is influenced by what the principal thinks because he is in the highest position of authority. The student council is influenced by what the adviser thinks, and it, in turn, influences what the student body thinks. The principal tries to take into account the feelings of the student body; the student body is influenced by the principal's ideas; the adviser is influenced by a competent student council's ideas about what the student body wants—and so on, in a potentially complex series of attitudes and opinions. The important thing to remember is that none of these people or groups is operating in a vacuum: they all look to each other, to some extent, to get their bearings on issues and situations. Try to bring all of them along with you, so that when they look to each other, there will be some agreement instead of conflict and doubt.

You have to start somewhere, so ask yourself: who has final authority in this case? The principal, naturally. If you are mobilizing to revise the constitution, he is the man of



whom you will ultimately have to be sure. So even though you've got to get the council's approval of the revision before the principal can affix his judgment to the issue, start working with the principal. Drop in to see him before the matter comes up in the council. Ask his advice. If the principal is for your plan, great. If he is against your plan, the trip to his office can be crucially important. It gives you a chance to form a proposition which minimizes his objections. This is important: make sure that the motion which is presented in the council the first time is the closest to being agreeable to all parties concerned as you can make it (without destroying its basic effects).

The plot thickens as interaction begins. The best time for seeing the adviser is a multiple-choice kind of thing. The point is this: it would be nice to get a "yes" from one person before you go to see the other. Thus, if you think Miss Smithies would be in favor of the idea why not go see her first? This is normal protocol, and it would be nice to be able to mention to Mr. Mandelbaum that Miss Smithies thinks your plan is a good idea. On the other hand, if you think that Mr. Mandelbaum himself would be a champion of the cause (unlikely in this case), you might drop by to see him first. If he agrees, this "plus" from the principal can greatly influence the views of his adviser. (The adviser is there to represent the views of the principal and the school administration, so if the principal agrees with you, the adviser is apt to defer to his wishes. "Well, I don't agree, but that's what Mr. Mandelbaum wants.") At the same time, if Mr. Mandelbaum says no and Miss Smithies says yes, she might be willing to "lobby" for you at the principal's office. (At least up to a point: she naturally doesn't want to endanger her department chairman prospects.) If you get a "no" from both the principal and the adviser, then back to the drawing board—to draw up a plan, if possible, which minimizes the objections of *both* people.

No matter what, don't *avoid* talking with the principal and adviser. Don't make them feel you're trying to do something behind their backs. They'll appreciate just knowing that you sought them out for pre-meeting advice. A thoughtful move like this on your part may be the only "plus" you can be sure of: even if you lose, the foundation of frankness and trust you have laid will continue to work for you.

Now that we have started crossing two of the bridges, let's turn our attention to another one: the student council itself. It is common for an amendment to require a two-thirds majority vote in the council, and then in the student body at large. Chronologically, your first task is to get it through the council. When during the year is the best time, if any, to start crossing this bridge?

If you think that opposition in the council will be strong (due to the freshmen-are-dumb thought pattern, etc.) then you may spend a few months very profitably trying to build up the freshman image on campus. Increased respect for the freshman may be a way of subtly influencing the outcome in your favor when the issue goes to the council.

If you think your opposition will be strong just because the seniors won't want to give up their power, then pick the time of least resistance: spring, when the seniors are on their way out anyhow and can afford to be generous and vote for an abstraction called "representative democracy"! Give them the opportunity of leaving their alma mater with a legacy of justice in the form of your proposed revision.

Well, let's assume that things look bad enough to require both the image-building and the spring strategy. You begin by finding a few capable freshmen and giving them important things to do in the council itself (committee work, special reports, etc.). If they do a good job with their assignments, you are on the road to making them look respectable. At the same time, work with the freshman class council and give whatever assistance you can toward making it a top-notch group. When they have activities that go over well, make sure that the school paper lets everyone know about it. Anything you can do to show that they aren't "dumb," but rather, competent and hardworking, will facilitate matters immensely.

Okay. You've been building the freshman image, and finally it's spring. Time to move into high gear; time to think about presenting the proposition to the council.

First, have the matter "originate" from a source other than yourself (this will help you maintain the impartiality of a



presiding officer). Have it proposed by the Constitution Revision Committee, or some other group with an official sanction (this is more impressive than its being introduced by a member of the council on an individual basis). Obviously, you can work with this committee beforehand, and help them come out with a proposition which maximizes what you are interested in and minimizes the objections you have heard from the principal and adviser. This has the advantage also of getting many different viewpoints and reactions before the council meeting itself—so you have an idea of how to present the proposition in its most favorable light, and have a ready defense for any major criticism of the plan. Remember that the committee exists only by extension of presidential power: feel free to bring out your own views. On the other hand, you appointed its members because you wanted their help and advice. Don't squash their ideas—they may have some better than your own.

Now you're ready to do some field work. You've worked out some tightly argued reasons for the change, as a result of the committee discussions. Now you've got to have some people who agree with these arguments and will present them in the council meeting itself. You probably know a few people who would like the proposition. Seek them out. Talk the issue over with them. Suggest a few of your ideas as to why the change would be good; listen to some of their ideas in turn. Let them know the matter will be discussed at an upcoming meeting; tell them you'll look forward to hearing their views at that time. This technique is important. Find people who can speak up for your viewpoint because, if you are president, you can debate only by turning the chair over to your vice-president—and you lose the appearance of impartiality when you do so. If you are an officer other than the president, it might still be a good idea to say little until there appears to be a real need for you to step in. The best system is to add your approval to the idea more as a footnote than an onslaught; use it to tip the balance after other council members have spoken in favor of the proposition. At any rate, don't make it look like the officers and the committee

are trying to force the matter through the council. Sooner or later, it has to be a matter of popular will. Influence, but don't railroad.

While you're seeking people out to talk with them, don't forget to seek out those who are apt to oppose the issue. Even if you can't persuade them to hold your own view, it is valuable to get an idea of their strengths, weaknesses, and the areas in which they are willing to compromise.

An important factor in dumbfounding the opposition is to make them feel as though they are surrounded. Try to gain support from as many different people as possible—freshmen and seniors, committee members and spectators, officers and homeroom representatives, and so on. The appearance of unanimity is important.

The most crucial, subtle, and difficult-to-obtain support is that from the group which appears to have the most to lose by supporting the issue. Whatever group (if any) has the most to lose, get some member of it to support the proposal. This is really impressive. Presumably, if they believe in the matter so strongly that they are willing to give up personal advantage, the proposal must be good. (Also, a selfless attitude is sometimes contagious. And once you get the council members thinking about others more than themselves, things might really begin to happen!) In this case, the juniors are really the first to be affected by the change; if it takes effect next fall, they will be running in a tighter election because there will be fewer senior positions on the council. See if you can get some idealistic juniors to back the move.

Unfortunately, very few student council decisions are based on the power of pure reason. You can have the best intellectual arguments in the world, but what Johnny is really dying to know is whether or not Mr. Football Hero will vote for it. Likewise, Susie is watching Beverly, the Campus Queen in All Matters of Fashionability. No one—except an utter fool—would ruin her social career by voting differently from *Beverly!* And so, the inevitable contest between intellect and emotion, reason and acceptability, "facts" and prejudices. All too often the intellectual argument is reduced to being just

“dressing” for the quite unintellectual motives for voting. We may be voting with Mr. Football Hero, but we won't explain our vote to other people that way! Don't hesitate, however, to include a few “bigwigs” in your group of supporters if you can.

Well, now, let's do some calculating. You need a total of 27 votes out of 40 for your two-thirds majority. Where will they come from? Theoretically, the seniors have the least to lose; they will be gone when the change takes effect. If you appeal to their idealistic nature, you might walk off with 12 of their 16 votes. Oddly enough, the freshmen might give you only two of their four votes: a show of modesty since they have the most to gain, and also a tribute to the fact that they have undoubtedly been subjected to intimidation by aggressive upperclassmen. The sophomores are well enough established in the school to be little affected by intimidation, and are yet far enough away from the full effects of the change that they may come up with six of their eight votes. The juniors are much more on the firing line, and their 12 votes are apt to be the pivotal ones. They've spent a lot of time looking forward to being Mr. Beautifuls in their senior year, and this proposal lessens their chance. So far, we have totaled up an estimated 20 votes from the other classes. If those estimates prove good, you'll still need seven votes from the juniors to make it through. And—needless to say—this all depends on everybody getting to the meeting!

When you feel you're ready, put the matter on the agenda for the next meeting.

Let's assume that the meeting has arrived, and during the discussion things don't look so good. Students are balking over the idea of representation based on the population of each class. Since the freshman class is the largest in the school, it would end up with more votes than the seniors if the change were made on the basis of population. This is an uncomfortable prospect to a lot of upperclassmen.

As an idealist, you want it based on population. There is general agreement developing to the effect that each class should have the same number of representatives (10 apiece).

But it doesn't look like you can get it that way. You have worked for months, trying to create an atmosphere in which the proposition would be received as auspiciously as possible, but you came into the meeting with an estimated close margin, and you don't want to lose the whole thing after months of preparation. Where do you stand? There's really no good way to find out. Just mentally counting heads and guessing may be your best bet.

Of course, if you want to use a parliamentary angle, you can move that the motion be laid on the table. Theoretically, those opposed to your proposal would vote to lay it on the table, and those in favor of it would vote against laying it on the table. This would give you an indication of your strength or weakness. If the motion to lay it on the table is defeated, it may be because the majority of the students like the proposition and want to keep it under consideration so that it can be passed. If that is indeed the case, you may feel you have enough support to pass the proposal—and so you go ahead. If the proposal is indeed laid on the table, you have temporarily lost—until the next meeting. You'll have to make sure it is then taken off the table, and that when it is, you have more favorable votes than the last time. That means more work!

If you think you have enough strength to pass it but, in fact, you don't—and it is defeated—then that particular proposal is pretty much dead. At the next meeting (or even later in the same one) propose a different set-up. Compromise. Have a motion presented to the effect that each grade level be given *equal* representation on the council. This is more amenable to your opposition. It's not precisely what you want, but it's apt to carry, and it is definitely better than nothing.

Compromise may be inevitable anyway; there is still the principal and adviser, and then the entire student body. You have talked with them, asked their advice, and tried to take it all into account. The principal and adviser have probably given the matter some thought; they may be generally favorable to increased participation by underclassmen. If they are

against the population-base idea, they may favor the idea of equal representation by class. Thus, even if the council goes all the way for you, a compromise may be necessary before you're finished. Let's assume that the equal-representation-by-class solution is the one you end up with and put into effect.

It was a long journey, but then, there were other journeys started by talking with the principal and adviser; drafting a proposal in the committee; organizing support in the council itself; calculating your strength; compromising when it became necessary; and so on. Finally, you presented it to the entire student body, where the population strength of the underclassmen ensured an easy passage once the issue was presented clearly and often. Next year, each class will have 10 representatives. Some of the underclassmen who helped with this revision are already talking about trying again next year to get the representation based on class population. With an equal number of votes per class, it may be easier to marshall the support that didn't come through this year. At any rate, it appears that your compromise proposal is the best solution for the time being.

It was a long journey, but the, there were other journeys being undertaken at the same time. The student body wanted an improved baseball field, so you finally got approval to hold a carnival to raise money for one. The carnival was the biggest event in Gramlich High School history; though it didn't make enough money for the kind of field the student body wanted, Mr. Mandelbaum got a little money from a school-building-and-grounds fund to take it over the top. Mr. Mandelbaum refused to have any speakers "waste school time" in assemblies, but he didn't prevent the forming of a popular discussion group which met after school. He thought the student council was planning too many dances, and put a halt to the planning of one of them. On the other hand, the interest the council took in the school's automotive and electronics vocational program brought about some significant improvements in the comprehensiveness of the curriculum. Also, the Intramural sports proved quite successful.

Throughout the year, you kept in touch, and many proposals were hashed out by you, the student council, Miss Smithies, Mr. Mandelbaum, and the student body. By and large, you were successful. One thing was sure: you got a lot more done than you ever would have thought at the beginning of the year. Last September, Mr. Mandelbaum wouldn't even have *considered* letting you do half of the things you *accomplished*. It was tiring and frustrating at times, but you did a good job.

Of course, we could have set it up under optimal conditions. You know how it is in some student council literature: you make a proposal; the adviser congratulates you on your eminent brilliance; the principal loves it; the council can't pass it fast enough; the student body goes wild over you; the mayor gives you an award for citizenship; the city fathers proclaim a Student Council Day; and the President sends his best wishes. Uh-huh. Sure. We know.

Actually, it could go very smoothly, especially if you do the preparation work which we have discussed. The real situation will probably hit middle-ground between the fabled Sheer Triumph and the unplanned Total Failure. The approach I have used here is not meant to be pessimistic, but realistic. Indeed, there is such a thing as realistic optimism: "It will come out right, because we understand the situation and will work hard enough to *make it* come out right!"

The beginning of this chapter talked about persistence, and now, after examining a hypothetical situation, we see the role of compromise. One thing you should always remember: *If you have a choice between a 50 percent compromise and getting nothing, choose the compromise. You can usually get the other 50 percent later if you keep at it.*

Persistence and compromise must occur in alternating roles. Accept compromise; it is usually necessary. But make it *as temporary as possible*. Be persistent. Keep going. Next time you make a 50 percent compromise, you will actually be bringing your total score up to 75 percent (by adding half of the remaining 50 percent), and so on, right down to total victory. If your cause has merit and you keep at it, slowly

but surely, you can end up scoring the 100 percent which you wanted but which was impossible to get the first time around.

This, then, is the Silent Revolution: persistence and compromise. Its roots are real brotherly love as the motivation, anger as the catalyst, and practical knowledge as the guide. The Silent Revolution: quiet, selfless, demanding--and *effective*.



## The Idealist's Dilemma

Youth is a time for idealism. It is also a time when young adults are becoming members of society in a full sense—and find a lot to criticize about the society of which they are becoming a part. It is this dissatisfaction and idealism that keeps things moving—that inspires constructive change, and keeps us from becoming stagnant.

But although young people criticize those things which don't fit their ideals, they often know nothing about "technique," about how to achieve their ideals. Some who do know the method—establishing goals, organizing to meet them, compromising when necessary—would rather withdraw instead of "degrade themselves" by participating in the system for which they have so much disapproval. There exists a real phobia against working in the system and compromising, and so they never put their ideals into action. They keep their ideals, but nothing comes of them. (Not a very ideal situation!)

There is another group of people who virtually have "systemitis": they're so good at getting things done that somehow their sense of direction gets lost; they have *no* ideals to speak of. They've lost them completely, or put them up on a shelf somewhere out of the way.

This, then, is the dilemma: idealism is good, but if you keep your idealism, does that mean you must be ineffective? Likewise, does being effective mean that you must give up



your ideals? We need idealists always. But must an idealist sit on the sidelines and merely criticize; must he vegetate in a practical sense? Likewise, we must have people who know how to make things go, get the votes, pass the resolutions, start the projects, and so on. Must you have absolutely no scruples at all to be successful in "the system"? Isn't that a constant compromising of oneself?

Nonsense. Complete nonsense. It's *not* a choice between being an unprincipled wheeler-dealer and a sideline intellectual. Obviously, ideals and system know-how can be combined. The crucial question to ask is this: *Is my technique serving my ideals, or just perpetuating itself?* Is my know-how going any place significant, or just maintaining itself for some vague reason—or a lack of one? If the know-how is serving the ideals, you're in good shape.

Does compromise mean losing one's ideals? Does it mean self-compromise? Heavens, no. If it did, no one would have any ideals at all. No man can have his way all of the time; no man achieves his ideals all the time. You keep the same ideals, merely accepting a temporary delay—and meanwhile, work to make the ideals come true. Compromising means accepting less than you want. It doesn't affect your ideas of *what* you want. *You* can change your mind, but compromising doesn't change it for you. From start to finish, it's up to you.

The real question is simply, *to what extent can you make your actions reflect those ideals you hold dear?* How well can you make reality correspond to your dreams even if it necessarily falls short of the mark? Hopefully, a few Silent Revolutions will help answer the question in a positive manner.

About compromise being cowardly: what is so brave about sitting back with idealistic visions, but not having the courage to try to put them into effect?

Compromise is one of the greatest tools that the leader has to work with. Since all people are different, a student council of 40 members is apt to have 40 different views on the same issue. The task of the leader is to establish enough of a synthesis that something can be accomplished which suits the

majority of the people affected. If no one compromised, if everyone kept insistently to his own view—why, you'd never pass anything in 10 years! The leader has got to find the group's common denominator, and that means compromise from all sides.

There's another reason why finding the common denominator is important: it means the best backing possible for the final decision. True, there is always the danger of pleasing everyone a little and no one very much. But absolutism is not the answer: forcing one opinion on people who have many different ones is not the way to find a lasting solution to a problem. As a leader, you have your own convictions—and they should be represented. But most issues are complex enough to have several rational solutions. You can lead the group to find the compromise solution with the greatest possible force and effectiveness. A good compromise can unite all the different factions under one banner, and thus further ensure the success of the proposal.

Of course, *don't compromise unless you have to*. You may have the best idea to start with—so why spoil getting 100 percent if you can? But if it's a choice between compromise and getting nothing, don't fret about the compromise. (Civilization couldn't exist without it!) Just maintain your ideals foremost before you, and keep at it. Remember that in general, success comes from working *in* the system, not fighting it. Don't beat your head against a wall. Become one of the masons, and build the wall the way you think it *should* be.

## Can the Good Guys Win?

The movies are great. Take the average Western. Before it begins, you know how it will all turn out. The good guy always wins. He wears white, is kind to animals, and has 10,000 bullets in his six-shooter. The bad guy always loses. He wears black, is mean to his horse, and has only five bullets in his six-shooter. The good guy rides off into the horizon, a fair damsel at his side. The bad guy rides off to jail.

Now, it is not surprising that we rarely tire of a plot like that. Why should we? Everything is taken care of for us: the 10,000 bullets, the well-timed arrival of the cavalry, the beautiful girls; everything. Even better are the superheroes—the men whose powers are limited only by the imaginations of the scriptwriters. We adore the men who fly, see through walls, eat poison, drive super cars, leap buildings at a single bound, and, in general, are totally unbeatable under any circumstances. We just sit back and watch Good triumph. A push-button control on the best things in life.

The only surprising thing about these fantasies is that people forget they are just that—fantasies. We all know that life isn't like the movies. Intellectually, we are aware that all too often in real life the hero rides off into the horizon and gets shot, while the villain rides off to jail and gets probation. We *know* this, but we don't *behave* as if we knew it. In real life, too, we sit back and watch, thinking that the good guys always win.

In the movies, being good is enough. In real life, it isn't. The good guys have to be effective, as well as properly motivated. And to be effective, the good leader has to *compete* for leadership resources. This cannot be overemphasized: the techniques and resources for leadership are neutral. They will work for both good and evil men. The 10,000 bullets, the cavalry—they're all there, ready to help whoever knows best how to get them. If good is to triumph in real life, a good leader must compete successfully for the resources he needs. In the movies, the script gives him those resources. In real life, the script is indifferent and he has to get them for himself.

The good leader has got to know how to plan, to organize, to set a course and work with people and institutions who can help him make sure that that course is going to be followed. If a good leader can't do this, two things may happen: (1) someone who is *not* good may take over, or (2) there will be no leadership, just confusion and lack of direction.

First of all, it is obvious that *someone* is going to lead. *Someone* is going to use the techniques and resources of leadership. The crucial question is, what kind of person will it be? And the answer which we face all too often is: someone not properly motivated, someone who is in it for himself, someone who is not the best man available. Why is this the case? Perhaps it is because people either default their goodness by not using it, or try to use it and don't know how. Often, bad leaders are supported by good people who do nothing, who sit back and watch. Or, bad leaders win because good people don't know how to compete for leadership resources. Only if good leaders know how to plan, organize, and marshal the forces of good can bad leaders be defeated.

Confusion and lack of direction are the second possible result of ineffectiveness on the part of a "good" leader. This can be as bad as having a "bad" leader, for the simple reason that nothing good is apt to be accomplished. A good man with a leadership position who cannot put people and things together for unified and purposeful programs—well, he's no leader, only a holder of a leadership position. If he believes he should just go to meetings and let things happen; if he is

opposed to doing field work and taking a stand on what he thinks ought to be done; if he has been elected to help people help others but is too timid to try it; then he is a leader who either favors anarchy or labors under the illusion that problems solve themselves spontaneously by the unanimous consent of all the people at every meeting.

This is a point that so many people are self-contradictory about. Who is going to maintain that a leader should, in effect, close his eyes and hope for the best? He has been *elected* to give direction to group tasks, to discover wants and needs, and to see what can be done about fulfilling them. He can't do this by relinquishing his leadership. He can't do this by sitting back like everyone else. And yet, how many people interpret planning and organizing as "scheming," or "being sneaky," or even "immoral." It is really incredible that people should elect someone to lead them and then deny him all the tools of leadership that he needs to be successful!

One thing must be made clear. The Silent Revolution, as a technique, is simply a way of planning and organizing for success. No one is forced to agree to something about which he has doubts. Nothing is being railroaded. Nothing is being done behind the backs of students, teachers, or administrators. The leader in the Silent Revolution simply works to consolidate the people and institutions who agree on a policy; he plans and organizes so that they can become effective and successful "forces of good." The leader seeks to find what people need; he formulates a solution and finds and organizes those who agree with that solution; he works openly in the system to accomplish that solution. In short, he works to give the "good" its best possible chance for success.

No matter how deeply we feel that a good leader ought to succeed hands down, the fact of the matter is that he must go out and work hard to get that success. If he doesn't, either someone else will (and he may not be so good), or confusion and anarchy will reign, preventing the achievement of common goals. People who have this crazy notion that (1) goodness is enough and (2) anyone who has to compete for leadership tools or plan and organize in order to ensure success is

*bad*—these people have at best a very tenuous hold on the realities of life. Planning and organizing is the leader's job. Both are crucial to the success of any group venture!

Can the good guys win? Of course. If they *work*.

## PART THREE: THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

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### Chapter Nine

#### On Being Alive

Some students think that high school is a waiting period. "Boy, when I get out of high school," they say, "I'm really going to do my thing." Then they get out of high school, and start college or training school. "Boy, when I get out of college," they say, "I'm really going to swing out." And then they get out of college and get a job, and they say, "Yeah, well, I'm really going to do it, you know, right after the next promotion." And then they get the promotion, and they say, "Boy, when I retire, Mabel and I are really going to paint the town; we're really going to do it." And then they retire, and—*poof!* they're gone. All that waiting. For nothing.

There are some things you have to wait for. *Living* isn't one of them. You should be doing *now* all of the kinds of things you want to do all your life.

People will tell you that you're not supposed to do real things in high school. They will tell you that high school is only preparation for life. But what better preparation could there be for life than doing real things now—while there are people to help you learn, before it's too late?

High school years are very formative ones. The way you begin to think, the way you begin to look at things now, will have a very definite effect on the way you will *always* think, the way you will *always* look at things. It is not good at all if you get into a habit of waiting for some mysterious signal like graduating from high school before you begin the action.

Because the odds are, those habits will get the better of you: you will never get involved, you will never hear the signal. When the gun sounds, you may not even be near the race-track. Get started now: new tasks, challenging experiences, difficult problems. Get into good leadership-shape. Time is precious—don't wait. If you always plan to do it tomorrow, your life will be only a lot of empty yesterdays.

Obviously, there are people who are 60 and have never grown up, and others who are 16 and quite mature. Ask yourself: why is it that older people are generally looked up to? Isn't it because they have simply been around longer, and have more experience? Right. It's not because they are intrinsically smarter, or more talented, or what-have-you. They've just seen and done more. *Adults don't have a monopoly on talent or ability, just a head start on experience. And experience is something you can collect for yourself right now. Why not get started?*

Throughout your experience-gathering, keep one word in mind: *awareness*. There is a big difference between merely *remembering* what happened and *understanding* what happened. Try to always be aware of what is going on around you, and why. If a dance fails, don't accept it as fate: find out why. If an assembly goes well, don't just chalk it up to good fortune: find out what made it a success. If the principal says "no," don't consider it a matter of whim: ask him if he would explain more fully the reasons for his decision. You must always seek an awareness of what you have done and are doing, or you will learn little from your experiences. Don't just remember *what* happened: remember *why*. It is difficult to know what to do in the future if you don't understand what happened in the past.

At every age in your life, in whatever group you find yourself, there will always be pressures to conform. People feel threatened by others who are different from themselves, because those other people, by their very difference, prove that there is not just one way to live—and this causes many people to doubt their own lifestyles. By condemning or shunning the person who is different, people attempt to reassure



themselves about their own way of life. So the nonconformist can lead a lonely or at least a very private life.

Obviously, society must have a large degree of stability. But it also needs progress, and conformers have never moved a country forward. This country depends on people who are, by and large, nonconformists: people with new ideas, different approaches, unique skills, special backgrounds. If you want to be "your own man" and lead instead of imitate, the cult of conformity must be left behind.

Begin ignoring the conformity cult now. This is as good a time as any to "swing out." Why not? Go ahead and be individualistic, creative, Silent Revolutionary, dynamic, or just plain different. If you do so responsibly there shouldn't be any problems. Study Greek mythology, become an expert on an order of insects, overhaul a car, learn to sing or act, build a phonograph system, try sculpturing, read *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, study modern drama, play the harpsichord, start a business, learn to paint, invest in stock; develop your own theories about historical events and offer your own analyses of current social problems; go out into the "adult world" and work on a few projects of community-wide scope; contribute significantly to the "student world" in your own school. There is so much to do and be: don't be afraid to develop your own interests and tastes. There should be more to distinguish you as a person than just your name.

One of the lifetime problems of any leader is self-renewal. You can, and will, get tired. You can get so tired that something dies inside. One of the best ways to combat that kind of death is to always be learning something new—to always be excited about a new horizon, a new skill, a new hobby, a new recreation. Remember when you were little and you finally learned to ride a bike? You were so excited you told the whole neighborhood. And the first time you could swim across the pool; or the time you filled out the "Great Britain" page in your stamp album? It seems funny, looking back. But there is a feeling of discovery, of challenge, of joy in extending your life in a simple way over more of the world around you.

Too many people specialize too early in life, and then stay that way—cutting themselves off from the potential renewal of diverse activities. As a leader, you will need to be a “generalist”—someone who can understand and put together many diverse people in many different fields, to produce a unified team. Doing a lot of different things can contribute to your understanding of a lot of different people—and can give you a way of relating to them.

The feeling that you are growing is a positive, satisfying feeling about life. It is also a very practical necessity. If you aren't growing as fast as your peers, you won't always be a leader. You will be passed up by those who are growing faster—and you should be. The world is changing rapidly. If you aren't growing fast enough to keep up with it, then the reins of leadership ought to be turned over to those who *are*.

Start being a real person now. Don't get into the habit of waiting for meaning—search it out. If you're waiting for something magical to happen, you'll be waiting forever. Don't wait. Because the world won't wait for *you*.

You're alive now. Don't vegetate. *Initiate.*

## Dragons vs. Windmills

It is popular among students in most schools to maintain that the student council is a hoax, a real farce. And usually these students are right. Personally, I would not credit more than 30 percent of the student councils I have seen with being either effective or vaguely meaningful—much less both.

But the crucial question is not whether or not student councils are hoaxes. The question is: *Can they become meaningful institutions?* And to that I answer an unqualified *yes*. There is tremendous potential for student councils to do real things, to provide real challenges for student leaders and significant activities for the student body at large. Saying a student council is a hoax is one thing; saying you can't do anything about it is something else entirely.

Unfortunately, a student council is no better than its members. As we said earlier, *most student councils are hoaxes because the students want it that way*. A lot of students are in this student council fling because it's fashionable. They're not in it to *do* anything, unless it be to bask in their own glory. They want the applause, they want to be part of the chosen elite, to be Mr. Beautiful, to be worshipped—but not to roll up their shirt sleeves and get their hands dirty trying to do anything real and significant. It's much easier for them to sit back and complain that the council is a hoax, and it's all the principal's fault. Why should they strain themselves? They've made it into the school's most cliquish little club—

self-sustaining and self-satisfying, isolated from the rest of the student body (all those *other* students). They have arrived. Congratulations. And thanks for nothing.

The fact of the matter is that what you do as a student council leader is deadly important. For the student body, the activities program is the key to the way people learn; it is at least half of the school's curriculum; and it may be the entire school program for those who do not plan academic careers. For student leaders, it may be the first conscious attempt as America's young adults to work together in complex organizations to get things done. Everyone has something to lose if the student council does nothing.

The problems of society at large are already forming during the high school years. Do the leaders really represent the people? Do the people have equal voting rights? What is the level of direct participation? How many people vote? Are the leaders skillful in dealing with people? Are decisions carried out? There are scores of questions which can be applied to the student council which sound exactly like problems from a civics textbook on American government. *And they are the same problems.*

Many students criticize the American government for being isolated from the people, when their own school operates as an oligarchy, not a democracy, and only 20 percent of the student body votes at elections. Many students dislike the private interest groups that lobby in Washington but, at the same time, allow their own councils to be dominated by the votes or voices of special interests like clubs, cheerleaders, newspaper editors, and football captains. Students criticize national leaders for bungling or for not having a plan—when in their own schools they rarely draw up agendas for meetings, and almost never follow up on the resolutions and bills which are passed.

If society is going to improve, where is the improvement going to start? I think it has to start right where you are—in high school. During high school years, students begin to make up their minds about "the Establishment," and whether or not working in the system pays off. If you can't show that

working in the system can bring about needed changes—peacefully—then some students will decide that violence is the only way, and others will decide that there is *no* way. Neither of these alternatives will help America. Violent acts hurt individuals and cause waves of actions; and passivity, a dying of the human spirit, undermines the entire society and its way of life. Somehow, we've got to prove that man is still capable of influencing his world for the better. And that proof can't be words. It must be actions, relevant actions, beginning right where you stand—in high school.

In a school where the student council is just a nice little club, a student who takes it seriously is bound to be laughed at. "Take it easy, Joe. The whole thing's a farce. Don't ruin it by being serious. It's funny the way it is now." It is possible that the laughter may die down later. But the inevitable fact seems to be that trying to inject meaning into a student council will make a student look like a Don Quixote—jousting with windmills he mistakes for dragons. "Sit down, George, and stop making a fool of yourself." "Did you hear what John said?" Sick, sick, sick. Somebody better cue him in. Student council is only for college application forms—you're not supposed to *do* anything. Everybody knows that."

One, two, three—everybody laugh.

Well, it is easy to slip into the category of Official Windmill Fighter. It is easy to lose one's sense of direction; it is easy to get stuck on small issues and petty arguments; it is easy to win only Pyrrhic victories. And even when things are going well, it must be remembered that Rome wasn't built in a nine-month school year. The really big things you want to see happen may not happen in the year or two you spend in the student council. You have to accept the fact that your goals are limited by the situation; you won't have enough time to do it all. It may take many student councils after you have graduated to finish what you start.

But that's just the point—starting. A lot of people, looking just at the distant miles, convince themselves that the first step isn't worth taking at all. But every mile, every mountain, is just a series of those little steps. If you can take one, the

odds are that you can take the next one, too—and the next one. Certainly, the man who tries may not be successful. But the man who never tries can only fail.

Being a Don Quixote, idealistic and laughed at, charging windmills, is essentially a tragic role. But perhaps if we set forth better armed than Don Quixote ever was, we can slay real dragons, not just windmills. Perhaps if we have real concern as our motivation, anger for a catalyst, practical knowledge for guidance, and if we are willing to undertake Silent Revolutions *now*; then, perhaps we shall succeed as Don Quixote never did. Meanwhile, there is no little amount of satisfaction derived from knowing we're giving all we've got—we're working at full potential, using everything that we know and all that we feel, to make people happier. For that, it seems to me, it is worth being laughed at by *anybody*.

Every idea, every plan, every major breakthrough in world history began with *individuals*. It had to start somewhere—and, always, it started with one or two people. This is important to remember, in a time when so many people have come to believe that the great steamroller of life is rolling them flat. The power of the individual as the source of creativity remains. And always, it is the example of that person's life which expresses that power. It may require a heap of faith to believe what you do, but if you are willing to act on that faith, and never tire of working for it, other people are bound to start jumping as well. If you can't finish the work, then find others who can carry on after you're gone so the idea won't die. Don't drop the torch—pass it on.

A statement which has always appealed to me is one attributed to Andrew Jackson: "One man with courage makes a majority." It has seemed to me for a long time that a man of conviction, with practical knowledge and skill, can't help but go a long way. I still think so.